Hhh. 325

A

SERMON

Preached at *Christ-Church* in

BRISTOL,

Before the Right Honourable

Sr Francis North,

Lord Chief Justice of His Majesty's Court of

Common-Pleas:

At the Assizes held there, *August* 7th, *Anno Dom.* 1675.

By *Richard Standfast* Master of Arts, and Rector there.

LONDON,
Printed by *A. M.* for *Charles Allen*, Bookseller in *BRISTOL*, 1676.

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To the Right Reverend Father in God, GUY by Divine Providence Lord Biſhop of *BRISTOL.*

Right Reverend Father,

I Cannot but be ſenſible how unfit a Perſon I am now, after Thirteen years blindneſs, to offer any thing unto Publick View, eſpecially in ſuch an Age as this; But ſeeing that it is your Lordſhip's deſire, that theſe weak Meditations of mine ſhould be made publick, I am willing to obey; and the rather, that the world may know, That whatever Faction and Diviſion there is, or hath been amongſt us here in this City, it hath not paſſed without publick diſcovery and reproof. I will give your Lordſhip, at the preſent, no further trouble, than humbly to crave, that, as theſe Meditations, ſuch as they are, had your Lordſhip's Approbation when you heard them from the Pulpit,

Pulpit, ſo you would be pleaſed to let them paſs under your Patronage from the Preſs: And hereby I ſhall be the more obliged to be, as I am,

Your Lordſhip's moſt humble

Servant,

RICHARD STANDFAST.

A SERMON Preached at *Chriſt-Church* in *BRISTOL*, &c.

NUMBERS XVI. 15.

Moſes was very wroth, and ſaid unto the Lord, Reſpect not thou their offering.

SAint *Paul* ſaith, *That all Scripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furniſhed unto all good works*, 2 Tim. 3. 16, 17.

The word of God revealed unto us in his holy Book, is, it ſeems, a perfect rule both of Faith, and Manners: Here we may learn, both what to believe, and how to live; what to embrace, and what to avoid; if our deſire be to have the fruit in holineſs, and the end everlaſting life. All ſorts of perſons may here be taught what belongs to their duty in their ſeveral places wherein God hath ſet them: and the more to encourage

courage us to perform our duties, the Precepts of God are ſeconded with many and precious Promiſes, both of the life that now is, and alſo of that which is to come: and his Prohibitions are backt with many and heavy Threatnings, relating both to ſouls and bodies; and to miſeries, not only temporal, but alſo eternal: And for the better confirming of our Faith concerning both theſe Promiſes, and theſe Threatnings, the Book of God hath ſet before our eyes Examples of both kinds; the more to allure us to that which is good, and the more to affright us from that which is evil: Such as were *Abel*, and *Noah*, and *Lot*, *Abraham*, and *Job*, and *David*; with many others on the one ſide: And *Cain*, and *Achan*, and *Gehazi*, and *Judas*, and the *old world*, and *Sodom*, and *Gomorrah*, on the other; amongſt which alſo we may reckon this matter of *Korah*, of which and of all others of like kind, we may ſay as St. *Paul*, 1 *Cor.* 10. 11, *All theſe things happened unto them for enſamples, and are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come:* For of *Korah* and his complices it is ſaid, they become a *Sign*, *Numb.* 26. 18, to warn others how they walk in their ways, leſt in the end they drink of theirs, or the like cup.

And 'tis indeed what God requires at our hands,

hands, diſobedient Apoſtates are call'd upon to *remember Lot's Wife*: And *Jeruſalem* is bid to *go to Shiloh*, and ſee what God did to it for the wickedneſs of his people *Iſrael*, *Jer.* 7. 12. And the ſame is expected of us concerning the matter in hand, *Go to Korah*, and ſee what was done to him and his company, leſt ye be like them: So that in this Chapter we have a perfect glaſs for all Seditious Schiſmaticks, for all Factious and Seditious perſons, wherein they may ſee not only a diſcovery of their ſin, but alſo a deſcription of their puniſhment; both which are written for our inſtruction, that we may hear, fear, and learn to beware of doing ſo wickedly, *Lege hiſtoriam ne fias hiſtoria.*

In this Verſe of my Text, we have *Moſes* his wrath, and then the effect thereof in the prayer that he made, when he ſaith to the Lord, *Reſpect not thou their offering.* But before I come to ſpeak of theſe, I muſt crave leave to begin a little higher, that we may the better ſee upon what account it was that he was ſo diſpleaſed; And that I may not ſeem overtedious, if you pleaſe but to fancy, that I have taken in the foregoing part of this Chapter for a conſiderable part of the matter of my diſcourſe, I hope I may be accounted the more excuſable.

In order therefore to my Text, we muſt know, that *Levi* had three Sons, *Gerſham*, *Coheth*, and *Merari*: from theſe three came the Families of the *Levites*: The Sons of *Coheth*, were, *Amram*, *Izhar*, *Hebron*, and *Uzziel*: The Sons of *Amram*, were, *Aaron* and *Moſes*: And the Sons of *Izhar*, were, *Korah*, *Nepheg* and *Zichri*, &c. Of theſe came the Families of the *Levites*, whoſe Names you may ſee, *Exod. 6.* And their Families and Number at large, *Num. 6. 3.*

Moſes and *Aaron* were the men unto whom God ſpake, and by whom he ſpake to *Pharaoh*, and by whom he brought them out of *Egyptian* bondage; after which he led his people like Sheep by the hand of *Moſes* and *Aaron*.

Theſe were two men unto whom God gave extraordinary Commiſſions, The one to be as a *Prince*, the other to be the *Prieſt* of God for the people of *Iſrael*: What *Moſes* did, he did by Gods appointment, and his Commiſſion was ſufficiently ratify'd by variety of Miracles, enough to convince the moſt incredulous; beſides all which, his meekneſs, juſtice, induſtry, prudence, care and love, manifeſted in thoſe great benefits, advantages and deliverances, which they enjoy'd by his means, were enough

to

to oblige them to ſubmit quietly unto his Government, tending ſo much to their own good: After they were got out of *Egypt*, God gave that people the Law; and after that, Orders for erecting of a Tabernacle for his publick Worſhip, every thing wherein was appointed by God himſelf, who communicated all to *Moſes*, and by him to the people; according to which, every thing was accompliſhed by *Moſes* his care, and the peoples voluntary and liberal contributions.

The Tabernacle being finiſhed and erected, Almighty God, who is debtor to no man, and may freely chuſe out for his Service whom he pleas'd, ſetled the Prieſthood upon *Aaron* and his family, unto whom were given all the Families of the *Levites* in lue of the Firſt-born; and theſe were offered unto God as an holy offering, and were conſecrated unto God for the ſervice of the Tabernacle; but yet between the Office of them and the Prieſt, there was a manifeſt difference; They were for the ſervice of the Tabernacle, but they had nothing to do within in the Sanctuary, nor with offering of Sacrifice, nor with burning of Incenſe; That was peculiar to the Prieſt only.

The Tabernacle being erected, their manner

of pitching was thus: *Moſes*, *Aaron*, and the *Prieſt*, pitched on the Eaſt, the *Cohathites* on the South, *Gerſhon* on the Weſt, *Merari* on the North: When they did march, the things of the Sanctuary were all taken down, and covered by the Prieſt: Theſe were to be born on the ſhoulders of the *Cohathites*, after that the Prieſt had covered them: but they were not to touch any of theſe holy things: The *Gerſhonites* had the charge of the Hangings of the Tabernacle: The *Merarites* had the charge of the Boards, the Pillars, the Sockets, the Pins, *&c.* All things being thus ſetled, and every one appointed to his Place and Office, it was not long before there grew a great mutiny among that ſtiff-neck'd, and unthankful people, of which *Korah*, the Son of *Izhar*, the Son of *Cohath*, the Son of *Levi*, was the Author, and Ringleader; the Cauſe, and Captain of that Conſpiracy: *He took men*, ſaith verſe 1. But in the Hebrew 'tis only *cepit*, only *he took*, *tulit ſe ad partem*, He took a miſſe, a ſpleen as we ſay; he took exceptions; He thought *Aaron* too much honoured, and himſelf too much undervalued, and ſo doth all he can to raiſe a party againſt him: The Septuagint read it ἐλάλησε, *He ſpake*, *ſcil.* He had much conference with

with other men, whereby he acquainted them with his own intentions, and took counſel how to carry on his deſign : The *Genev.* Tranſlation reads it, *went apart with Dathan* and *Abiram :* Doubtleſs this was not a buſineſs done all at once; *Korah* had taken ſome time to tamper with others, to draw them into his aſſiſtance ; and becauſe he knew that he could not carry on his deſign without the aſſiſtance of the people, He firſt gets in with the Princes, and with thoſe that were moſt in repute for their Wiſdom and Piety.

A *Wat Tyler* may ſerve for an Idol of Clowns: but *Korah* is to make uſe of thoſe that were more Famous, *Quorum ex meliore luto finxit precordia Titan*, and that's the readieſt way to work upon the multitude: for ſuch draw many after them, who are eaſily wrought upon to follow them in the ſimplicity of their hearts ; and by an implicite Faith to conclude, that that cauſe muſt needs be good, wherein perſons of ſuch Worth and Honour are ſo deeply engaged.

Another way, whereby he wrought upon the people, was by Flattery : He tells them that all the Congregation was holy: he knew himſelf that this was falſe, for if he ſpake with reference to their manners, he knew ſo much of

their

their Murmurings, and Provocations, that he had no reaſon to call them holy; and if he had reference to their being ſet apart for the Service of the Tabernacle, he knew full well that none were Conſecrated for that Service, but the Tribe of *Levi*: But thus violent men, to carry on a deſign, will dare to ſay that which they themſelves do not believe: and do thoſe things for the ſupporting of their Cauſe, of which they may be aſhamed: Truth needs not the aſſiſtance of a lye, nor will God, that any man ſpeak wickedly for Him; 'Tis a bad Cauſe doubtleſs that muſt be carried on by Lying and Libelling, by Slanders and Forgeries, by Flattery and Diſſimulation; which, with whomſoever they are found, will be evidence ſufficient to convict ſuch men to be Deceivers and Seducers: And yet this did *Korah*, who to his Falſhood and Flattery, added Diſſimulation alſo; for the people were perſwaded to believe that, which they were never like to ſee; for it may well be thought, that the *Levites* intended to ſhare the Prieſthood among themſelves, and to exclude the people; as in likelihood the *Reubenites* did the Civil Power, when once they ſhould be ſucceſsful in their undertakings; as appears by Verſe 10, where

it

it is not, *ſeekeſt thou*, as ſpoken to *Korah* only, but, *ſeek ye*, in the Plural number.

To ſtrengthen the Party, the *Reubenites* muſt be brought in, at leaſt ſome of the Chief of them; but ſtill *Korah* was the Principal: for they are ſaid to ſtrive againſt *Moſes* and *Aaron* in the *company of Korah*, Numb. 26. 9. And 'tis obſerv'd, that the Conſpiracy it ſelf is always laid to the charge of *Korah*, not of *Dathan* and *Abiram*, ſee *Numb.* 27. 3, And *Korah* dealt with them, becauſe *Reuben* was the eldeſt Son; and had he not been Diſinherited, he might have claim'd the Princely Power, by vertue of his Primogeniture; and with whom *Korah* might have opportunity to converſe without ſuſpicion, ſeeing they both pitched on the South-ſide of the Tabernacle.

Thus the Civil Power was oppoſed by *Dathan* and *Abiram*, as the Eccleſiaſtical was by *Korah* and his company; which plainly appears by their differing arguments, whereby they ſeek the good-will of the people: *Korah* tells the people they are all holy; and herein he oppoſed *Aaron*: *Dathan* perſwades the people that they are not well Governed, and *that* they might eaſily ſee, unleſs they would put out their eyes; and that *Moſes* deſerved to be called

called to an account by the people for not discharging that Truſt which was committed to him: And this hath ever been the practice of Factious and Seditious perſons: nor is there any thing eaſier, than to perſwade the people to think well of themſelves, and ill of their Governours; nor any readier way to creep into the good-will and affection of the Common people, than by ſo-doing: By all which it doth appear, that their aim was to change the Government, both of *Church* and *State*; and to reduce the one to a kind of *Conſiſtory*, the other to a *Common-wealth*: For if *Korah* will have no *Aaron*, *Dathan* and *Abiram* will have no *Moſes*, and ſo *Prince* and *Prieſt* go down together.

The deſign being laid, and matters being brought to ſome maturity, they begin now to diſcloſe it openly; and they gathered together againſt *Moſes* and *Aaron*, and tell them to their faces, that they *took too much upon them*; too much State, too much Power, too much Honour, too much Authority; that they were too Arbitrary in their Government; that they did what they pleaſed; and then fathered it upon God, and ſaid, That he had commanded them; that they *lifted up themſelves* above the Congregation, *Numb.* 16. 3. And that *Moſes* had

ſet

ſet up *Aaron* without the ſuffrage of the people, only becauſe he was his Brother: So *Joſephus*. Nor was there any ſuch need of making him the High-Prieſt, ſeeing all were holy: Thus are they ſaid to ſtrive againſt *Moſes* and *Aaron*; but in ſo-doing they are ſaid to *ſtrive alſo againſt the Lord*, Numb. 26. 9, and that deſerves to be taken notice of; for thereby we may ſee, that, as he that deſpiſeth the Throne of the Magiſtrate, deſpiſeth the Throne of the King; So he that deſpiſeth the Throne of the King, deſpiſeth the Throne of God: and he that is an enemy to the Order of God, is an enemy to the very God of Order.

This indeed was the nature of their ſin: Pride and Ambition made them envious, and that brought forth ſuch oppoſition, and ſuch Inſurrection; for being confident in their numbers, they ſeem reſolved to win that by force, which they could not gain from *Moſes* and *Aaron* by any other perſwaſion.

The *Pſalmiſt* ſaith, They *envied Moſes* and *Aaron*, Pſal. 106. 16, but the root of their envy was their pride: Their pride made them think that they had too little, and that made them envious, becauſe they thought others had

too much: St. *Jude* calls this ſin of theirs the *Gain-ſaying of Korah*, ἀντιλογία, which word is alſo read *Heb.* 12. 3, and is there Tranſlated, *contradiction of ſinners*, &c. And indeed Chriſt was contradicted every way: They contradicted Him in his Perſon, denying him to be the Son of God; In his Office, not receiving him to be the Promiſed Meſſiah; In his Doctrine, giving out that he was a Deceiver; In his Miracles, ſaying that he was a Conjurer, and dealt with the Devil; In his Converſation, reporting him to be a Glutton, and a Wine-bibber, &c. In his very Life and Being, in preferring *Barrabbas*: Such was the contradiction of *Korah* againſt *Moſes* and *Aaron*, like thoſe *Jews* mentioned, *Acts* 13. 45, of whom it is ſaid, that when they ſaw the multitude, they were filled with envy, and ſpake againſt thoſe things which were ſpoken by *Paul*, ἀντιλέγοντες καὶ βλασφημοῦντες, *Contradicting* and *Blaſpheming*.

Unto all which, *Moſes* replies, and makes it appear, that they themſelves were foully guilty of that, of which they falſly accuſed others; 'Tis you that take too much upon ye, In that not being contented with your own lot, you become ambitious of the Prieſthood alſo; and having propoſed a way for the diſcovery of which

which of the Parties God had made choice of to offer Sacrifice, and to burn Incenſe, to prevent further difference, He then ſent for *Dathan* and *Abiram*, but they ſent him word plainly, *they will not obey him*; and lay to his charge thoſe things, for which they might juſtly thank their own provocations; for they thought ſcorn of that Pleaſant Land, of which, not *Moſes*, but their own ſins had hitherto hindred the poſſeſſing and enjoying. All theſe things were ſo pleaſing to a great part of the Common people, that they thought highly of thoſe bold men that durſt to ſpeak ſo plainly to their Governours, accounting them gallant men, Partiots of their Country, and Aſſertors of the peoples Liberty; accounting them the Godly party, and the people of the Lord, *Numb.* 16. 41: But the Holy Ghoſt hath other names for them, *Scil. ſinners againſt their own ſouls*, Verſe 38. *Wicked men*, Verſe 26. *Rebells*, Chap. 17. 10. *Ungodly ones*, for *Pſal.* 106, 'tis ſaid, the flame burnt up the ungodly: The truth is, there can be no ſuch thing *in rerum natura*, as a *godly Rebel*: for if Godlineſs cannot prevent Rebellion, Rebellion will over-throw their Godlineſs.

And being now come to the obſtinacy of

Dathan and *Abiram*: methinks we are come down to our days; wherein, under pretence of tenderneſs, we meet with ſo much ſtubbornneſs; under pretence of meekneſs, ſo much wilfulneſs; and under pretence of conſcience, ſo much oppoſition and obſtinacy: but how pleaſing ſuch things were unto *Moſes*, we may ſee by his carriage, for *he was exceeding wroth*, ſaith the Text.

Some read the words, He was *exceedingly grieved*; and no doubt but ſo he was: And good reaſon he had ſo to be; not ſo much in his own behalf, to ſee himſelf ſlighted and oppoſed by thoſe of whom he had ſo well deſerved: but eſpecially for their own ſakes; to ſee that a people ſo obliged, ſo convinced, ſhould be ſuch enemies to themſelves, as to court their own miſery; ſo to deſpiſe thoſe things that did belong to their Peace; and to run ſo wilfully headlong to their own Confuſion: This could not chuſe but grieve *Moſes* to the very heart: Was it, think ye, no grief to the Prophet *Jeremy* to hear the people ſay to his face, as *Jer.* 44. 16, 17, *As for the word that thou haſt ſpoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee: But we will certainly do whatſoever goeth forth*

out

out of our own mouth, &c. Was it not a grief to our Saviour, that when he would have gathered the people, they would not? And is it not the (like to all faithful Miniſters, when they ſhall be conſtrained to ſay, *All the day long have I ſtretched forth my hands to a diſobedient and a gain-ſaying people*? When, take what pains we will, and ſpeak what ever we can, we ſhall find but this anſwer, We will believe but what we liſt, and do but what we pleaſe? Verily, it were enough to make us weary of ſpeaking any more in the name of the Lord: and were it not, that as long as we are faithful, our work will be with the Lord, tho *Iſrael* be not gathered; 'twere enough to make us leave all men to themſelves, and to ſay, *Si populus vult decipi decipiatur*: There is in the world too much of the temper of that people, who are as they that *ſtrive with the people*, *Qui nolunt veritati cedere ne victi quidem.* But remember, that for thoſe who are contentious, and obey not the Truth, &c. for ſuch there is but a ſorry portion, *Rom.* 2. 8, 9, Thus *Moſes* was grieved doubtleſs; but that was not all, for he was angry too; yea, *exceeding wroth*: And yet *Moſes* was reputed the meekeſt man upon earth; by which we

we may ſee, that wilful contempt of lawful Authority, is enough to incenſe, provoke and exaſperate the meekeſt Magiſtrate in the world: And if they that do ſo provoke Authority, do ſmart for it, they may thank themſelves.

But what if a man ſhould ask *Moſes*, as God did *Jonah*, *Doſt thou well to be angry?* I know not whether he would anſwer as *Jonah* did, *I do well to be angry to the very death*; but I doubt not but he would ſay, *I do well to be angry*: for there is a holy anger, a holy indignation, which is ſo far from being faulty, that it is juſtifiable before God.

St. *Paul* ſaith, *Be angry, but ſin not*, Eph. 4. 26. If the cauſe be juſt, and that it exceed not the due meaſure, anger is then a duty: And *Moſes*, as mild as he was, and as ſlow to wrath; yet in Gods Cauſe he knew how to be angry: When the people had made a Molten Calf, the anger of *Moſes* waxed hot, *Exod.* 32. 19: and here the contumacy of the people made him very angry: in ſuch caſes, not to be angry, is a ſin: *Quia ira Eli tepuit in filios ira Dei exarſit in illum:* But then we muſt take heed that our paſſion tranſport us not, and carry us whither we ought not;

he

he that is ſwift to wrath, is not like to be ſlow to ſpeak; and how much there is of paſſion in any diſcourſe, ſo much there is of nothing to the purpoſe; for then reaſon, like a bad Hound, ſpends upon a falſe ſcent: As meek as *Moſes* was, when his ſpirit was provoked, he ſpake unadviſedly with his lips; of which he was ſadly remembred a long time after, *Pſal.* 106. 32, 33. The tongue is but a little, but (if not bridled) 'tis an unruly member; and therefore we had need *be ſlow to wrath: for the wrath of man worketh not the righteouſneſs of God.*

I proceed to the ſecond part of theſe words, *Moſes* being diſpleaſed with the carriage of the people; be-takes himſelf unto God for ſhelter. Which words I look upon not as proceeding from human frailty, but from an holy indignation; not from the tranſport of paſſion, but from an heavenly inſpiration; not as a paſſionate imprecation, but as a Prophetical declaration; not for our imitation, but for our inſtruction and admonition; to teach us what they muſt look for, that go on in ſuch wickneſs.

That people are in a ſad condition whom God forbids the Prophet to pray for, as *Jer.* 7. 16,

Pray

Pray thou not for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make interceſſion to me, for I will not hear thee: For whither ſhould we fly for refuge in the time of trouble, but to the Throne of Grace, by humble and hearty prayer? But if God be angry with the prayers of his people; if he compaſs himſelf as with a Cloud, that our prayers cannot paſs through; if this way be obſtructed, what other way remains for conſolation?

But if it be ſad not to pray for them; it muſt needs be worſe to pray againſt them: and yet thus did the Prophet againſt Idolaters, *Iſa.* 2. 9, the mean man boweth down, and the great man humbleth himſelf; *therefore forgive them not*: And little inferiour is this in my Text; for where God refuſeth the Offering, he regards not the Offerer; and ſeeing that God did what *Moſes* deſired, 'tis manifeſt, that his deſire was with Gods Approbation.

David accounts it a great bleſſing to have his prayers heard, and ſervice accepted, *Pſal.* 20. 1, 2, 3, 4, *The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble: the name of the God of Jacob defend thee*, &c. And well he might, becauſe it tends to aſſure us of Gods love; and that's a thing better

better than life it ſelf: It muſt needs therefore be ſad to have our ſervice rejected, and to be ſent away with a curſe inſtead of a bleſſing; and yet there are ſeveral things which will mar our beſt performances, and hinder our moſt fervent prayers from being effectual.

As for inſtance, All wickedneſs in general, is a hinderance to our prayers: thus ſaith *David*, Pſal. 66. 18, *If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me*: and thus ſaith *Solomon*, Prov. 15. 8, *The ſacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: but the prayers of the upright is his delight*: Of which truth, *Cain* and *Abel* are a ſufficient evidence; for righteous *Abel* found favour with God; when *Cain*, who was of that wicked one, was ſent empty away.

Beſides this, there are ſeveral particulars that will enter a caveat againſt our prayers, and obſtruct and fruſtrate our beſt Devotion; as will fully appear by theſe places of Scripture following, *Prov.* 28, 9: *He that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law, even his prayer ſhall be an abomination.* Prov. 1. 24, 25, &c. *They that turn the deaf ear to the counſel of wiſdom, God will not hear them when they call upon him.* Prov. 21. 13, *Whoſo ſtoppeth his ears at*

the cries of the poor, he alſo ſhall cry himſelf, but ſhall not be heard. And *Iſa.* 2. 15, *When ye ſpread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear: your hands are full of blood:* All which I only mention, becauſe my intent is to keep cloſe to this matter of *Korah*, which is here before us.

This is certain, That God heareth not ſuch ſinners as go on ſtill in their wickedneſs, and hate to be reformed: But, *if any man be a worſhipper of God, and a doer of his will, him he heareth*, Joh. 9. 31. It ſeems by that, that without doing the will of God; our Worſhipping of him is in vain; neither will our prayers find audience, nor our ſervice acceptation, if this doing of the will of God be wanting.

Now it is the will of God, that if it be poſſible, as much as lieth in us, *we live peaceably with all men*, Rom. 12. 18. Again, It is the will of God, *That we ſtudy to be quiet*, and *to meddle with our own buſineſs*, 1 Theſ. 4. 11. Again, *It is the will of God, that we hurt no body* by word or deed, *that we ſpeak not evil one of another*, Jam. 4. 11. (by way of Cenſure, Slander or Reviling); eſpecially, that we *ſpeak not evil*

evil of the Ruler of the people, Acts 23. 5. Laſtly, 'Tis the will of God, that *we ſhould ſubmit our ſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lords ſake*, whether it be to the King as Supream, or unto Governours as unto them that are ſent by him, for the puniſhment of evil doers, and for the praiſe of them that do well; *for ſo is the will of God*, that with well-doing you may put to ſilence the ignorance of fooliſh men, 1 *Pet.* 2. 13, 14, 15. All theſe things are plain, expreſs, and undeniable: In all theſe places the Spirit ſpeaketh expreſly; and if any erroneous perſwaſion can be of force to abſolve men from that obligation which theſe plain Texts of Scripture do lay upon them, then hath the Spirit ſpoken them in vain: And as theſe Scriptures are plain, ſo 'tis as manifeſt, that *Korah* and his company were deeply guilty in every one of theſe particulars: And therefore well might *Moſes* pray, *Reſpect not thou their offerings*: For

Firſt, They were guilty of *Criminal Schiſm*, for they had made a rent in the *Church*, and ſown diſcord among Brethren; they had drawn the people into Parties, and cauſed Diviſions, even without a cauſe: *Optatus* calls them plainly *Schiſmaticks*: for in comparing Gods differ-

ing dealing with bloody *Cain*, Sacrilegeous *Nineveh*, and Seditious *Korah*; he saith, *Quod in parricidam & sacrilegos non fecit id in schismaticos fecit*: meaning *Korah* and his Seditious company: Nay, they had not only made a rent in the *Church*, but they had laid a ground for the continuation of Sedition for all future Generations; for if we may judg of their Opinions by their Practice, their Principles will be found to be these following, *viz.*

1. That Power was Originally in the people.

2. That the people had Power to call their Magistrates to an account, even the most Supream; and to Depose them from their Places of Authority, if they thought fit; and to change the Government both of *Church* and *State*.

3. That it was lawful to seek, by the tumultuous Insurrection of a numerous multitude, to gain those things from their lawful Superiours, which they could not obtain by any Argumentative Perswasions or Petitions: And had not the God of Order and Peace confuted these positions, by confounding the designs, and destroying the persons of those that own'd them, these principles would have been a foundation, upon which any discontented spirits, or ambi-

ambitious perſons might have been encouraged to have raiſed Sedition from generation to generation, whenever they had a mind ſo to do: And therefore well might *Moſes* ſay, *Reſpect not thou their offering*: For they were deeply guilty of a needleſs Schiſm: and to Worſhip God in ſuch a way of Schiſm, is to Worſhip him in a way of ſin; and that cannot be pleaſing unto God: There is but *one Lord*, *one Faith*, *one Baptiſm*, &c. *Chriſt is not divided*; There is the *unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace*: and he that is the *one God*, cannot but hate cauſeleſs Diviſions, as much as the *Holy One* doth Impiety and Prophaneſs.

2*dly*, *Korah* and his Company were buſy-medlers in what did not belong unto them; and ſo *Moſes* tells them to their faces, ſaying, *You take too much upon you, ye Sons of Levi*: And well might he lay this to their charge; for being but *Levites*, they would needs encroach upon, and intrude themſelves into the Prieſts Office; but they paid dearly for it: God looks that every man ſhould keep his own Station, and move within his own Sphear; and he that acts without a Commiſſion, though he do nothing but what is materially good, he ſhall be called to account as an Uſurper: Almighty

mighty God is not the Author of Confuſion, but of Peace; but this breaking of Ranks, is the way to Confuſion; and was in them ſo diſpleaſing to Almighty God, *that the flame burnt up the ungodly.*

3*dly*, *Korah* and his Company had ſpoken evil of the Rulers of the people; they laid to their charge that they took too much upon them; that, in effect, they had been too Arbitrary in their Government; that they did Domineer too much over their Brethren; that they had lifted up themſelves above the Congregation of the Lord; that they had not been as good as their Words; and that they had no better than Deceived the people; that they had brought them out of *Egypt* to their loſs; and inſtead of Fields and Vineyeards, and a ſetled condition, had brought them only to wandring up and down from one place to another in a barren Wilderneſs: Thus did they ſlander thoſe whom God had ſet over them; accuſing them falſly of ſuch Crimes as they were no way guilty of: and therefore well might *Moſes* pray, *Reſpect not thou their offering*: And 'tis no more than what our Saviour hath taught us, *Mat.* 5. 23, 24: *If thou bring thy gift to the Altar, and there remembreſt that thy*

thy Brother hath ought againſt thee: Leave there thy gift before the Altar, and go thy way: firſt be reconciled to thy Brother, and then come and offer thy gift: By which it appears, that where there is no ſeeking to be reconciled to thoſe whom we have offended, there will be no accepting of the gift that is offered.

4*bly*, And laſtly, *Korah* and his Company were guilty of contumacious obſtinacy againſt the juſt commands of lawful Authority; for when *Moſes* ſent for *Dathan* and *Abiram* to come up to the Tabernacle, they ſent him word again, like ſtubborn Rebels, in plain terms, *They would not come up:* And this obſtinacy will moſt infallibly nonſuit our moſt fervent Petitions; For *He that reſiſteth the Power, reſiſteth the Ordinance of God; and they that reſiſt, ſhall receive to themſelves damnation*, Rom. 13. 2. So that *Moſes* had reaſon enough to ſay as he did, *Reſpect not thou their offering*: And by all this that hath been ſpoken, I ſuppoſe it to be very plain and manifeſt, that they who cauſe or countenance needleſs Diviſions in a Church or State; They who keep not their own Station, but meddle with things beyond the bounds of their own proper Calling; They that ſlander their Betters, deſpiſe Dominions,

nions, ſpeak evil of Dignities, and diſobey thoſe that are their lawful Governours and Magiſtrates: they had need to repent of this their wickedneſs; which if they do not, they may juſtly fear that they ſhall one day periſh in the *Gain-ſaying* of *Korah*: Theſe things, as I conceive, are all plain by the Text; and I earneſtly wiſh, that the Diſſenters of theſe times would ſeriouſly think upon them, and lay them to heart, leſt after all their care and coſt, they come ſhort, in the end, of their expectation.

Our Saviour ſaith, In the laſt days many ſhall come and ſay, *Lord, Lord*, &c. *Mat.* 7, and yet he diſowns them, becauſe workers of iniquity. There is *filthineſs of the Spirit*, as well *as of the Fleſh*; from which we muſt be cleanſed, if we would perfect holineſs in the fear of God.

Will it not be matter of grief, if after all which they pretend to have *done*, and *ſuffer'd* for Chriſt's ſake, they ſhall hear, inſtead of a *well done good and faithful ſervant*: a *who required theſe things at your hands?*

There is a pretence I know, of a purer Mode of Worſhip: But he that for an imaginary purer Mode, ſhall part with Peace, Unity and Charity, Duties of ſuch abſolute neceſſity to

Salvation, that man is like to have but a hard bargain.

Are there not found with ſome of them, things of the ſame nature which *Korah* and his Company were guilty of? Hath not the Church of *England* many things againſt them? Are there not amongſt them, that are guilty of Criminal Schiſm, in ſetting up Anti-Churches in oppoſition to our ſolemn Aſſemblies (for where we may have communion without ſin, there without doubt 'tis a ſin to ſeparate)? Are there not ſome who take too much upon them? who adventure upon the Miniſterial Office, without a Miniſterial Commiſſion? Remember *Uzzah*, &c. Did ever any man ſafely adventure to be Embaſſadour for a King, or but a Juſtice of the Peace, were his abilities never ſo great, without a Commiſſion? And are not we Embaſſadours for Chriſt? and ſhall any man take this honour to himſelf, without he be called to it? Surely he that cometh not in by the dore, may well be accounted a Thief and a Robber: Are there not ſome that have Slandered their own Mothers Sons? nay, their Mother the Church of *England* her Self; accounting her little better than a *Romiſh* Harlot? And for contumacious reſiſting of Authority, 'tis too

manifeſt to be deny'd; for they ſay plainly, with *Dathan* and *Abiram*, *We will not come up*; And after all this, muſt their ſervice needs be pleaſing unto God? Why then doth *Moſes* ſay, *Reſpect not thou their offering*?

Fain would I know, if there be any one duty of neceſſity to Salvation, which may not be freely practiced in the communion of our Church: May not a man be as good a Chriſtian in our Communion, as fleſh and blood is capable to be, whilſt we are on this ſide Heaven? What then means the Contumacious obſtinacy which is daily ſeen in ſome of thoſe men, unleſs it be to carry on a deſign, and to keep men in a Rebellious temper, till they ſhall have opportunity to uſe them?

What men of *Korah*'s *temper* have done, even of late years, in this our Land, we know: What they would do, if they had power, none but God knows: only this we know, That if He, in whoſe hands be the hearts of men, do not incline us all to Unity and Peace, we are not very like to ſee our *Jeruſalem* in Proſperity, nor Peace upon our *Iſrael*: For *a houſe, or a Kingdon divided againſt it ſelf, cannot ſtand.*

I know it is Printed in behalf of the Diſſenters, even of this City, That if they might be

their own judges, they are not to be accuſed of either Impiety towards God, Contempt of the Laws, Diſloyalty to their King, or imprudence to themſelves, from their preſent Perſevering in thoſe ways which they now walk in: But whilſt they have ſo much of *Korah* in them, if this ſaying of theirs be generally true, I muſt get me a new Bible, for in that which I have already, I can find no ſuch thing.

I know that Conſcience is much pretended for the juſtifying of diſobedience; but to no purpoſe: for Conſcience alone can be no ſufficient rule to walk by, becauſe it may be ignorant and erroneous, and prepoſſeſt with prejudice and partiality, ſelf-love and ſelf-intereſt: 'Tis very true, that to act contrary to Conſcience, may betray us into ſin: but 'tis true withall, that 'tis poſſible, that whilſt a man acts according to his Conſcience, he may act contrary to his duty, and become guilty before God.

In a word, If Conſcience ſhall be allowed a Power to make void all the Commands of Superiours, farwel all Government whatſoever, and let every ſervant be his own Maſter.

To draw to a concluſion: In that which I have ſpoken upon this Subject, if my own

heart

heart deceive me not, I have not aim'd at any man's favour, nor coveted any applauſe; nor deſign'd the exaſperating of any perſons: what I have done in this kind, hath been to diſcharge mine own Conſcience, and out of a deſire to do good: And whatever Entertainment theſe weak Endeavours of Mine may find, thus much I may ſay of them, They may be, *Correctio, ſi velitis*; and will be, *Teſtimonium, etſi nolitis*: They may be for the reformation of the faulty, if they will; But whether they will or no, they will be a witneſs againſt them.

The God of Peace give us all Humble and Teachable minds, together with Peaceable and Charitable hearts, that ſo with one mind and one mouth, we may glorifie the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: To whom be glory both now and for ever, *Amen.*

FINIS.